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Putin: Some troops near Ukraine leaving; dialogue to go on

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin said Tuesday he welcomed a security dialogue with the West as his military reported pulling back some of its troops near Ukraine — signals that may indicate the Kremlin has opted for a diplomatic path for now despite Western fears of an imminent Russian invasion of its neighbor. Putin said he doesn't want war and would rely on negotiations as he presses his demand for the West

to halt Ukraine's bid to join NATO. At the same time, he didn't commit to a full pullback of troops, saying Russia's next moves in the standoff will depend on how the situation evolves. While the overtures soothed global markets that have been on edge amid the worst East-West tensions in decades, Washington and its European allies remained cautious, saying they want to see evidence of a Russian pullback.

Continued on page 5

RUSSIAN RETREAT



Russian President Vladimir Putin gestures speaking during a joint news conference with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz following their talks in the Kremlin in Moscow, Russia, Tuesday, Feb. 15, 2022.

Associated Press

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Senate GOP delays votes on Raskin and 4 other Fed nominees

By **CHRISTOPHER RUGABER**
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican members of the Senate Banking Committee boycotted a vote Tuesday on President Joe Biden's five nominees to the Federal Reserve, delaying indefinitely the confirmation of Chair Jerome Powell to a second four-year term. Democrats control the committee, but because no Republican attended the session, votes couldn't take place under the panel's rules.

The boycott stemmed from Republican opposition to Sarah Bloom Raskin, a former Fed governor and deputy Treasury secretary under President Barack Obama whom Biden picked to be the Fed's top



Sarah Bloom Raskin, a nominee to be the Federal Reserve's Board of Governors vice chair for supervision, speaks during the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee confirmation hearing on Thursday, Feb. 3, 2022, in Washington.

Associated Press

banking regulator. Sen. Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania, the senior Republican on the committee, argued that Raskin had provided

inappropriately used her connections to the Fed to benefit the company.

Committee Republicans have also objected to Raskin's past statements on climate change, in which she urged the Fed to consider risks to the financial system from weather disasters and other impacts of rising temperatures in its bank oversight. Toomey has charged that Raskin would use the Fed's tools to discourage banks from lending to oil and gas companies.

The delay in the committee's consideration of the nominees reflects an unusual degree of partisanship surrounding Raskin, a sign that the nation's political polarization is now engulfing the Fed, traditionally a relatively nonpartisan institution. In 2010, when she was first appointed to the Fed's Board of Governors, Raskin was confirmed unanimously by the Senate. "Important questions about Ms. Raskin's use of the 'revolving door' remain unanswered largely because of her repeated disingenuousness," Toomey said in a statement Tuesday. "Her fitness to serve, her judgment, and her probity are of utmost importance because Ms. Raskin is being considered for a 10-year term at the nation's independent central bank and foremost financial regulator."

Sen. Sherrod Brown, the Ohio Democrat who chairs the committee, denounced his Republican colleagues for refusing to attend the committee meeting and vote.

"Ms. Bloom Raskin has been the subject of an unrelenting smear campaign and fear mongering by (Toomey) and Republicans — something that's become all too common," Brown

said.

The committee was scheduled to vote Tuesday on Powell, Raskin and Lael Brainard, a Fed board member whom Biden has nominated to the vice chair position. Votes on economists Lisa Cook, who would be the first Black woman to serve on the Fed's board, and Philip Jefferson, who would be just the fourth Black man, were also scheduled.

Powell is serving as Fed chair on an acting basis after his term expired Feb. 4. The Fed's seven-member board of governors currently has three vacancies. Brown and the Biden White House argued that with inflation rising it was important to approve all the nominees. The Fed's missions are to keep unemployment low and stabilize prices.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said the boycott was "totally irresponsible at a time when it's never been more important to have confirmed leadership at the Fed to help continue our recovery and maintain price stability."

Brown said before the hearing that he would not separate out Raskin's nomination and vote on the four other nominees, a process that could allow them to proceed to the Senate floor for final approval.

"We're not going to let them cherry-pick," Brown told reporters on Capitol Hill. "We're not going to play that game."

Brown and the other Democrats on the committee gathered at the scheduled time for the vote, but no Republicans were present. After criticizing their absence, Brown said he would reschedule it for another time. He provided no further details. □



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Report: Conspiracy theorists fuel bump in extremist killings

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN
Associated Press

Newer strains of far-right movements fueled by conspiracy theories, misogyny and anti-vaccine proponents contributed to a modest rise in killings by domestic extremists in the United States last year, according to a report released Tuesday by a Jewish civil rights group.

Killings by domestic extremists increased from 23 in 2020 to at least 29 last year, with right-wing extremists killing 26 of those people in 2021, the Anti-Defamation League said in a report first provided to The Associated Press.

The ADL's report says white supremacists, antigovernment sovereign citizens and other adherents of long-standing movements were responsible for most of the 19 deadly attacks it counted in 2021. The New York City-based organization's list also included killings linked to newer right-wing movements that spread online during the coronavirus pandemic and former President Donald Trump's presidency.

The ADL concluded that roughly half of the 2021 killings didn't have a clear ideological motive, fitting a pattern that stretches back at least a decade.

The group's tally included a shooting rampage in Denver by Lyndon James McLeod, who killed five people in December before a police officer fatally shot him. McLeod was involved in the "manosphere," a toxic masculinity subculture, and harbored revenge fantasies against most of his victims, the ADL report notes.

Right-wing conspiracy theorists killed five people last year in two incidents, both involving "troubled perpetrators," the ADL report says. In August, California surfing school owner Matthew Taylor Coleman was charged with killing his two young children with a spear gun in Mexico. Coleman told an FBI agent that he was "enlightened" by conspiracy theories, including QAnon, and believed his wife had

passed "serpent DNA" on to his children, according to a court affidavit.

A Maryland man, Jeffrey Allen Burnham, was charged with killing his brother, his sister-in-law and a family friend in September. Charging documents said Burnham confronted his brother, a pharmacist, because he believed he was poisoning people with COVID-19 vaccines.

"Prior to the coronavirus, the anti-vaccine movement in the United States did not have a particular ideological leaning and contained both left-leaning and right-leaning activists," the ADL report says. "However, the politicization of the coronavirus and other factors have created many new anti-vaccine conspiracy adherents and given the anti-vaccine movement a distinctly right-wing tone it did not previously have."

The QAnon conspiracy theory has been linked to other acts of real-world violence, including last year's riot at the U.S. Capitol. In June, a federal intelligence report warned that QAnon adherents could target Democrats and other political opponents for more violence.

A core idea QAnon promotes is that Trump was secretly fighting a Satan-worshipping, child sex trafficking cabal of "deep state" enemies, prominent Democrats and Hollywood elites. QAnon hasn't faded away with Trump leaving office.

Mark Pitcavage, a senior research fellow at the ADL's Center on Extremism and author of Tuesday's report, said the QAnon movement is still evolving and increasingly overlapping with other extremist movements, including vaccine opponents.

"Could it sort of dissipate into those or could it find some sort of new focus or new life? Or could it just hang around if Donald Trump is elected again in 2024 and take a new form then?" Pitcavage said during an interview. "It's difficult to predict the future of those movements, so it's difficult to predict whether



A person carries a sign supporting QAnon during a protest rally in Olympia, Wash., on May 14, 2020.

Associated Press

they will continue to have this sort of similar effect on people."

A dearth of mass killings in 2021 meant that last year's tally was far lower than the totals in any year between

2015 and 2019, when killings by domestic extremists ranged from 45 to 78.

In other respects, the ADL data for 2021 mirrors long-term trends.

Right-wing extremists have

killed at least 333 people in the U.S. over the past decade, accounting for three-quarters of all extremist-related killings, the report says. The ADL distinguishes between killings that it considers to be driven by ideology and those that it found to be non-ideological or lacking a clear motive. Its report says the numbers for each category have been close to even over the past 10 years. The ADL concluded that 14 of the 29 extremist killings in 2021 were apparently motivated at least in part by ideology.

The ADL attributed 13 killings last year to white supremacists, three to anti-government extremists, two to Black nationalists and one to an Islamist extremist. □

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Sandy Hook families settle for \$73M with gun maker Remington

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP)

— The families of nine victims of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting announced Tuesday they have agreed to a \$73 million settlement of a lawsuit against the maker of the rifle used to kill 20 first graders and six educators in 2012.

The case was watched closely by gun control advocates, gun rights supporters and manufacturers, because of its potential to provide a roadmap for victims of other shootings to sue firearm makers.

The families and a survivor of the shooting sued Remington in 2015, saying the company should have never sold such a dangerous weapon to the public. They said their focus was on preventing future mass



Families of the victims of the Newtown shooting and attorneys listen during a news conference in Trumbull, Conn., Tuesday, Feb. 15, 2022.

Associated Press

the lawsuit should have been dismissed because of the federal law that gives broad immunity to the gun industry. The Connecticut Supreme Court ruled Remington could be sued under state law over how it marketed the rifle, under an exception to the federal law. The gun maker appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which declined to hear the case.

Whether similar lawsuits can proceed against gun makers remains unsettled because the U.S. Supreme Court has not yet weighed in on the exception to the 2005 immunity law used by the Sandy Hook families, Lytton said.

Remington, one of the nation's oldest gun makers founded in 1816, filed for bankruptcy for a second time in 2020 and its assets were later sold off to several companies. The manufacturer was weighed down by lawsuits and retail sales restrictions following the school shooting. Adam Lanza, the 20-year-old gunman in the Sandy Hook shooting, used the rifle made by Remington and legally owned by his mother to kill the children and educators on Dec. 14, 2012, after having killed his mother at their Newtown home. He then used a handgun to kill himself as police arrived.

Lanza's severe and deteriorating mental health problems, his preoccupation with violence and access to his mother's weapons "proved a recipe for mass murder," according to Connecticut's child advocate. Messages seeking comment were left for Remington and its lawyers Tuesday. The National Shooting Sports Foundation, a Newtown-based group that represents gunmakers, said courts should not have allowed the case to proceed and it believes the plaintiffs would have lost at trial. It also said the settlement should have no effect on the The Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act, the 2005 federal law that shielded gun makers from liability. □

Driver found with bomb-making materials at California base

CORONADO, Calif. (AP)

— The main entrance to North Island Naval Air Station near San Diego was closed Tuesday after a motorist was found with bomb-making materials, a military spokesman said.

The vehicle approached the gate at about 9 a.m. and was stopped and searched at the request of Naval Criminal Investigative Service officials, Naval Base Coronado spokesman Kevin Dixon

told the San Diego Union-Tribune. The search turned up bomb-making materials that were not assembled into any kind of device, Dixon said. Officials detained the driver in for questioning, the Union-Tribune said.

Entry to the base was still available through two other gates.

Naval Air Station North Island is one of eight U.S. military installations that make up Naval Base Coronado. □



The U.S. Navy Aircraft carriers USS Ronald Reagan (CVN-76) left, and USS Nimitz (CVN-68) are seen docked at Naval Air Station North Island in San Diego Bay, on Sunday, Jan. 21, 2007.

Associated Press

shootings by forcing gun companies to be more responsible with their products and how they market them.

At a news conference, some of the parents behind the lawsuit described a bittersweet victory.

"Nothing will bring Dylan back," said Nicole Hockley, whose 6-year-old son was killed in the shooting. "My hope for this lawsuit," she said, "is that by facing and finally being penalized for the impact of their work, gun companies along with the insurance and banking industries that enable them will be forced to make their practices safer than they've ever been, which will save lives and stop more shootings."

Gun rights groups said the settlement will have little effect on rifle sales and gun makers, who continue to be shielded from liability in most cases under federal law. But some experts said it may prompt insurers to pressure gun makers into making some changes.

"We might expect to see increased pressure from insurance companies for gun manufacturers to avoid the kind of either design choices or marketing practices that gave rise to this litigation," said Timothy D. Lytton, a law professor at Georgia State University.

The settlement is not the first between victims and a gun manufacturer. Families of eight victims of the Washington, D.C.-area snipers won a \$2.5 million settlement in 2004, with \$550,000 coming from Bushmaster Firearms Inc. and the rest from the gun dealer. But Lytton said the impact of the Sandy Hook settlement could be greater because it is so much higher.

The civil court case in Connecticut focused on how the firearm used by the Newtown shooter — a Bushmaster XM15-E2S rifle — was marketed, alleging it targeted younger, at-risk males in advertising and product placement in violent video games. In one of Remington's ads, it features the rifle against a plain backdrop and the phrase: "Consider Your Man Card Reissued."

As part of the settlement, Remington also agreed to allow the families to release numerous documents they obtained during the lawsuit including ones showing how it marketed the weapon, the families said. It's not clear when those documents will be released.

Remington had argued there was no evidence to establish that its marketing had anything to do with the shooting.

The company also had said

Continued from Front

The U.S. and NATO have warned that over 130,000 Russian forces massed near Ukraine could invade at any time, and they sent troops and military supplies to shore up NATO members in Eastern Europe. Russia has denied having such plans, demanding that the West keep Ukraine and other ex-Soviet nations out of the alliance, halt weapons deployments near Russian borders, and roll back forces from Eastern Europe. The U.S. and its allies have roundly rejected the demands, but offered Russia to engage in talks on ways to bolster security in Europe. Speaking after meeting with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Putin said the West agreed to discuss a ban on missile deployment to Europe, restrictions on military drills and other confidence-building measures — issues that Moscow had put on the table years ago. He said Russia is open to discuss "some of those elements," but added that it would only do that "in complex with the main issues that are of primary importance for us."

Asked if there could be a war in Europe, Putin said Russia doesn't want it but said Ukraine's bid to join NATO posed a major security threat to his country.

While Scholz reiterated that NATO's eastward expansion "is not on the agenda — everyone knows that very well," Putin retorted that Moscow will not be assuaged by such assurances.

"They are telling us it won't happen tomorrow," Putin said. "Well, when will it happen? The day after tomorrow? What does it change for us in the historic perspective? Nothing."

He went on to argue NATO expansion violates the principle of the indivisibility of security enshrined in international documents.

"We want to solve this issue now as part of negotiation process through peaceful means," Putin said. "We very much hope that our partners hear our concerns and take them seriously."

Scholz also said diplomatic options are "far from exhausted," and praised the

announcement of a troop withdrawal as a "good signal," adding: "We hope that more will follow."

The Russian Defense Ministry released images of tanks and howitzers rolling onto railway platforms and more tanks rolling across snowy fields. It did not disclose where or when the images were taken, or where the vehicles were headed, other than "to places of permanent deployment."

Russian forces continue to threaten Ukraine along the eastern border and from the Black Sea Crimean peninsula that Moscow seized from Ukraine in 2014, the year when it also backed a separatist insurgency in the country's east. More Russian troops loom over Ukraine in Belarus, where they were deployed for sweeping joint drills.

A U.S. defense official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations, said Pentagon analysts are reviewing the Russian withdrawal claims.

Ukraine expressed skepticism about Russia's statements on the pullback.

"We won't believe when we hear, we'll believe when we see. When we see troops pulling out, we'll believe in de-escalation," Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said that "so far, we have not seen ... any signs of reduced Russian military presence on the borders of Ukraine," adding that the alliance wants to see a "significant and enduring withdrawal of forces, troops, and not least the heavy equipment."

British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss reiterated the invasion danger still exists. Norwegian Foreign Minister Anniken Huitfeldt issued a similar warning, and Estonia's foreign intelligence agency said the Russian armed forces could launch an operation "from the second half of February."

Few Russians expect a war, following the Kremlin's dismissal of Western warnings as "hysteria" and "absurdity."

In a village in Russia's Belgorod region about 30 ki-



In this photo taken from video provided by the Russian Defense Ministry Press Service on Tuesday, Feb. 15, 2022, Russian army tanks move back to their permanent base after drills in Russia.

Associated Press

lometers (18 miles) from Ukraine's border, residents carried on with life as usual, even as more military personnel have been passing through village streets.

"We are friends with Ukraine," said villager Lyudmila Nechvolod. "We are really on the border, we really have relatives here and there, everyone has somebody there (on the Ukrainian side). No one wants war."

Western officials who briefed The Associated

Press said they saw no signs of de-escalation but rather the opposite, with Russia continuing to build up combat forces and other capabilities, including field hospitals. They said there are "some signs of a diplomatic opening" and they believe Putin still has not made a final decision to invade but has all the capabilities in place.

A U.S. defense official said small numbers of Russian ground units have been moving out of larger as-

sembly areas for days, taking up positions closer to the Ukrainian border at what would be departure points if Putin launched an invasion. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss information not publicly released.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken held a call with Lavrov, according to a State Department official who spoke on condition of anonymity because the call had not been publicly announced.

President Joe Biden, who telephoned French President Emmanuel Macron on Tuesday, is expected to give brief remarks later in the day on efforts to de-escalate Ukraine-Russian tensions, according to the White House. The U.S. "remains open to high-level diplomacy in close coordination with our allies," according to an administration statement. "The United States continues to believe diplomacy and de-escalation are the best path forward, but is prepared for every scenario." □



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Ethiopia lifts state of emergency early, citing calming war

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Lawmakers in Ethiopia voted Tuesday to end the country's three-month state of emergency early as mediation efforts to end a deadly war in the north continue.

The vote took place after Ethiopia's Council of Ministers, chaired by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, decided on Jan. 26 to end the state of emergency originally imposed for six months, citing recent developments in the conflict.

The state of emergency was imposed in early November as Tigray region forces fighting Ethiopian and allied forces moved closer to the capital, Addis Ababa. The Tigray fighters withdrew back into their region in late December amid mediation efforts and under pressure from a drone-supported military offensive carried out by the government.

Thousands of mainly ethnic Tigrayans were detained under the state of emergency, according to witnesses, lawyers and human rights groups. Many were released after December's shift in the war.

There was no immediate word Tuesday on when the rest of the people detained under the state of emer-



Pedestrians walk along a street in downtown Addis Ababa, Ethiopia Tuesday, Feb. 15, 2022.

Associated Press

gency would be released. They include a freelance video journalist accredited to The Associated Press, Amir Aman Kiyaro.

The state-affiliated Fana Broadcasting reported: "The state of emergency investigation board is instructed to finish any outstanding works within a month and report back to the relevant body. Judicial bodies are also instructed to finish emergency law-related cases within the regu-

lar judicial process."

The United Nations secretary-general encouraged Ethiopian authorities to "take further measures to ensure the decision is followed up by the release of those remaining people that are in detention as a result of the state of emergency, or for the reasons of their detention to be regularly reviewed at least by a court and other independent impartial judiciary," spokesman Stephane Du-

jarric told reporters.

Ahead of Tuesday's vote, an advisory committee within the Ethiopian parliament said the lifting of the state of emergency would help revive the country's economic and diplomatic situation. Parliament speaker Tagesse Chafo said the committee believes the country's security threats can now be dealt with by regular law enforcement mechanisms.

Fana Broadcasting report-

ed that some members of the advisory committee raised concerns regarding threats posed by the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front and the Oromo Liberation Army, which have been fighting the federal army and its allies.

The parliament speaker said a new "corrective measure" is being put in place to deal with security threats in the Amhara, Afar, Benishangul Gumuz and Gambella regions and the Wellega area in the Oromia region.

Ethiopia's war erupted in November 2020 and is believed to have caused the deaths of tens of thousands of people and the displacement of millions. Though the war has subsided in several places, notably within the Tigray and Amhara regions, concerns remain in the northeastern Afar region.

Aid remains for millions in the Tigray region remains severely limited under what the U.N. has described as a "de facto humanitarian blockade." On Monday, the World Health Organization said it has been granted access to send medical supplies to Tigray for the first time in six months, but fuel shortages are hampering distribution. □

Pakistan letting India deliver wheat to hungry Afghanistan



Pakistan laborers unload sacks of onion imported from neighboring India at Pakistani border Wagah near Lahore Pakistan, on May 14, 2013.

Associated Press

By MUNIR AHMED
Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Pakistan is allowing nuclear rival India to deliver tons of wheat to Afghans strug-

gling through intensifying food shortages, two Foreign Ministry officials said Monday.

Under a deal with New Delhi, dozens of trucks from

Afghanistan will be allowed to collect wheat from India by way of Pakistan's Wagha border near the city of Lahore, beginning Feb. 21. The trucks filled with wheat will then head back to Afghanistan's Jalalabad city via Pakistan's Torkham border the next day, the officials said.

They spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to media on the record.

The arrangement comes more than three months after India announced it would deliver 50,000 metric tons of wheat and life-saving medicine to Afghanistan.

Pakistan said at the time it would allow the Indian aid

to pass through its territory en route to Afghanistan, but New Delhi could not finalize modalities until last week, said the officials.

Pakistan and India have a history of bitter relations. Ties between them were further strained after deadly attacks in India's section of the disputed territory of Kashmir three years ago. More than 40 Indian soldiers were killed. New Delhi blamed Pakistan-based militants for the attack in Indian-controlled Kashmir, a charge Pakistan denied, demanding evidence.

Pakistan suspended trade with India in 2019 after New Delhi stripped the Indian-controlled section of Kashmir of its statehood and special constitutional

status. Since then, normal diplomatic and trade ties between them have not resumed.

Pakistan now says it is allowing India to deliver food to Kabul through its territory under a special arrangement.

Afghanistan's economy is teetering on the brink of collapse in the wake of the Taliban takeover in August. Also on Monday, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan in a meeting with visiting Iranian Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi stressed the need for urgent action by the international community "to prevent a humanitarian crisis and economic meltdown in Afghanistan," according to a government statement. □



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U.S. asks Honduras to arrest, extradite ex-President Hernández

By **MARLON GONZÁLEZ** and
CHRISTOPHER SHERMAN

Associated Press

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras (AP) — The United States

requested the arrest and extradition of former President Juan Orlando Hernández on drug and weapons charges less than three weeks after he left office, a move that follows years of accusations about the Honduran leader's alleged links to drug traffickers.

Honduran security forces surrounded Hernández's neighborhood Monday night and on Tuesday the Supreme Court of Justice met to choose a judge to handle the extradition request.

Honduran Security Minister Ramón Sabillón, who was fired by Hernández as head of the National Police in 2014, said Tuesday that Hernández had conspired "with cartels to traffic (drugs) and corrupt many public institutions, which led to social deterioration and undermined the application of justice in Honduras."

He said the main charges Hernández faces in the U.S. were drug trafficking, using weapons for drug trafficking and conspiracy to use weapons in drug trafficking.

U.S. prosecutors in New York had repeatedly implicated Hernández as a co-conspirator during his brother's 2019 drug trafficking trial, alleging that his political rise was fueled by drug profits.

His brother, Juan Antonio "Tony" Hernández was sentenced to life in prison on drug and weapons charges in March 2021. At his sentencing Assistant U.S. Attorney Matthew Laroche characterized the crimes as "state-sponsored drug trafficking."



Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez answers questions from the Associated Press, Tuesday, Aug. 13, 2019, as he leaves a meeting at the Organization of American States, in Washington.
Associated Press

Nicole Navas, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Department of Justice, declined comment late Monday about the U.S. extradition request.

In a video released by Hernández's legal team, apparently from inside his home, attorney Félix Ávila said that no arrest order had yet been issued.

Hernández released an audio recording via Twitter early Tuesday thanking his supporters. "It is not an easy moment," he said. "I don't desire it for anyone."

He said his lawyers had informed the National Police that "I am ready and prepared to cooperate and go voluntarily ... to face this situation and defend myself" if an arrest order is issued.

The identity of the judge chosen to handle the case was not immediately released. However, the court's president, Rolando Argueta, is known to be close to Hernández, and all 15 Supreme Court justices were selected by Congress in 2016 during Hernández's first presidential term. They

serve seven-year terms, and most come from his National Party.

The U.S. moves were a long-awaited fall for a leader reviled in his home country who enjoyed support from the Trump administration but had been kept at arm's length by the Biden White House, which has targeted Central America's endemic corruption as a root cause of migration.

Last year, U.S. Sen. Patrick Leahy was one of a dozen senators who supported a bill that sought to isolate Hernández by imposing sanctions on him and prohibiting the export of tear gas, pepper spray and rubber bullets that Honduran security forces deployed in recent years against protesters.

"Throughout the past eight years of decay, depravity, and impunity, successive U.S. administrations sullied our reputation by treating Hernandez as a friend and partner," Leahy said in a statement Tuesday. "By making excuse after excuse for a government that had no legitimacy and that

sight of what we stand for and that our real partners are the Honduran people." Dana Frank, a Honduras expert and professor of history emerita at the University of California, Santa Cruz, said the U.S. wants to look heroic for finally trying to bring Hernández to justice, but that successive administrations going back to President Barack Obama enabled Hernández.

"Hernández was able to wreak havoc with Honduras, with devastating costs, in large part because the U.S. supported him up to the last minute," Frank said. Honduran criminal lawyer Marlon Duarte said that the extradition process against Hernández, if it moves ahead, would not last more than three months. □



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Blue Residences: Work & pleasure in paradise

EAGLE BEACH — Dreaming of your own private Caribbean sanctuary is a reality now. Allow us to define this: Blue Residences offers you a condo or penthouse with top notch amenities equal to the offerings of high-class resorts facing the Caribbean Sea, the white-powdered sands of Eagle Beach. According to the Travelers Choice Beaches Award, it is one of the top 25 beaches in the world. And if you don't believe them, you can always read the thousands of positive reviews on TripAdvisor.

Blue Residences is situated in front of The Bubali Plas bird sanctuary and one of the biggest reservoirs on the island. It's also within walking distance to Palm Beach, home of the high-rise luxury hotels. The location is unequalled on the island with a variety of water sports concessions, casinos, restaurants, bars and shops just a leisurely stroll away.

The onsite amenities include pools, hot tub, restaurant, landscaped sun-deck, fitness center, full service spa and concierge service.

The project has three towers which contains 60 two-bedroom, two-bath units; 32 three-bedroom, three-bath units; 8 one bedroom, one bathroom unit; 4 four-bedroom, four-bath duplex townhouses; 2 five-bedroom, five-and-a-

half-bath duplex townhouses; 12 three-bedroom, four-bath duplex penthouses; and 6 five-bedroom, five-and-a-half-bath duplex penthouses.

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This is an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be the owner of one of the hottest spots in the Caribbean and own an amazing, upscale penthouse. There are two levels of 180 degrees of spectacular, ocean-viewing pleasure and amazing daily sunsets await you! Porcelain tiles, Italian-designed kitchens, stainless steel appliances (stove, refrigerator, dishwasher and microwave), washer and dryer machines and assigned parking space is what you get for a great offer. Take this chance to buy your dream and be part of a builder's organization with an impeccable reputation who even arrange your short-term and long-term rentals if you are looking for a return on your investment.

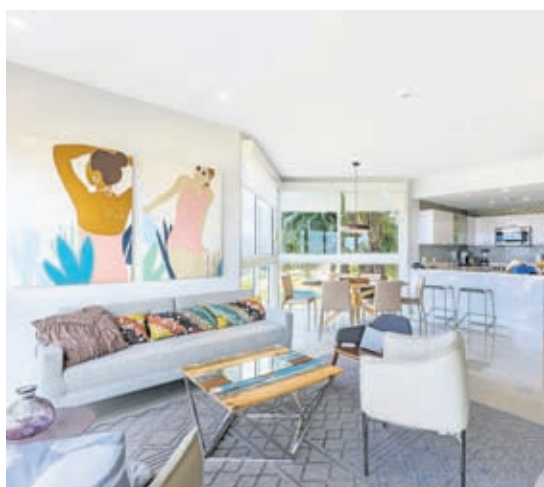
Office is set for you

Did you know Aruba has the best internet connection in the whole of the Caribbean?

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If you want to rent or buy and live the Blue Residences experience please email Jaime Gomez at jgomez@azure-aruba.com or visit www.bluearuba.com. The sales office is open from Monday to Sundays from 9 am to 5 pm. Go see the amazing view. ☐



Aruba Today launches amazing campaign



ORANJESTAD — As a token of appreciation to all our readers and followers, Aruba Today launches a Like, Share, Tag & Win Campaign starting today February 16, 2022.

Prize:

Win a weekend stay at Caribbean Palm Village for 4 persons. Price can be redeemed from April 16th till Dec 2022.

What to do:

Step 1: Like the facebook page of Aruba Today
Step 2: Tag 2 friends in the comments box
Step 3: Share the campaign post on your timeline (public)

Winner will be announced on Wednesday April 6, 2022 thru our facebook page.

Remember to follow all 3 steps. Increase the odds of winning by sharing the post as much as possible.

About Caribbean Palm Village

Caribbean Palm Village Resort provides guests with a quiet, peaceful and serene environment perfect for relaxing the mind and body and rejuvenating the heart and soul. The resort is conveniently located within just minutes from major restaurants, grocery stores, nightlife and beaches. Caribbean Palm Village Resort is your perfect destination for fun and sun. ☐

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Play Responsibly. Visit www.gamblersanonymous.org if you or someone you know has a gambling problem.**Feb 16, 1942****Commemorating 80 years of the attack on Aruba during World War II**

SAN NICOLAS — The small island of Aruba played a very important role in the Second World War. At that time, the Lago was one of the largest refineries in the world in terms of production. The gasoline refined at Lago was used for the Allied planes and so the island became a vital point in the Western Hemisphere: for the Americans to defend and for the Germans to attack. Torpedoes were fired on ships and on the Aruban coast.

Already in 1939, when the threat of war was in the air, the first measures were taken for the defense of the island and the refinery. At Juana Morto, the highest point on the eastern part of the island, a coastal battery was built with views over the refinery and the North and West coasts.

Aruba was regularly visited by German ships in those years, but when the Germans invaded the Netherlands and war broke out between the two countries, only the German ship

Antilla was anchored at Malmok. Since it was now a ship belonging to a nation with which the Netherlands was at war, the ship was surrounded by soldiers and the crew was ordered to surrender. When threatened with violence, the crew boarded lifeboats and the captain set the ship on fire. It broke in half and sank just offshore. The crew was detained and later transferred to the internment camp on Bonaire, as well as other Germans living or staying on the island. On the evening of May 10, 180 French marines landed in Aruba to assist in the defense of the island. The Lago was reinforced with anti-aircraft guns and Oranjestad and San Nicolas were darkened at night, as were the two refineries, the Lago and the Arend.

In July 1940, the French troops were relieved by English and Scottish troops. Aruba itself only had a small regiment of soldiers, the Volunteer Corps Aruba (V.K.A.). That is why conscription was introduced

and in December 1940 the first batch appeared. To meet the need for shelter for the military, construction was done in Oranjestad and in Savaneta. In Oranjestad, a shelter for officers was built, which after the war served as a so-called pasanggrahan and then continued to serve as a government office for decades. Behind it, the NCO's quarters was built, which later became the Recipient's Office. The buildings along the harbor of Oranjestad, which after the war were converted into a cinema, restaurant and department stores by businessman De Veer, were converted during the war as canteens and dormitories. In Savaneta a camp was built for Scottish troops (The Cameron Highlanders) and after the war for the Dutch Marine Corps.

In late 1941, America became involved in the war and the entire Caribbean came under American surveillance. In January 1942 the first American sol-



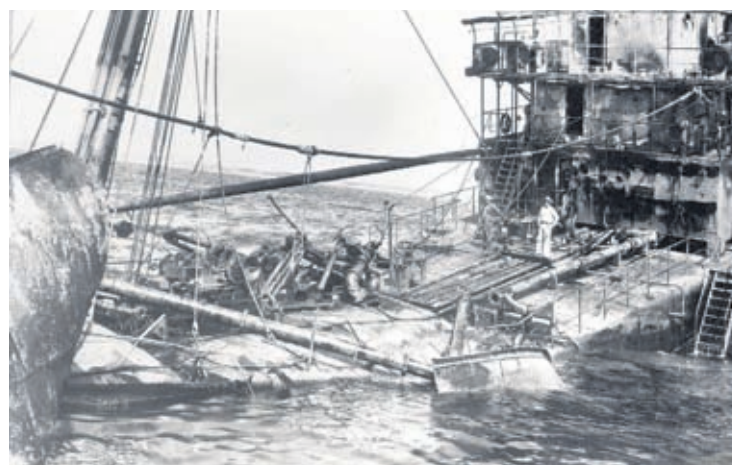
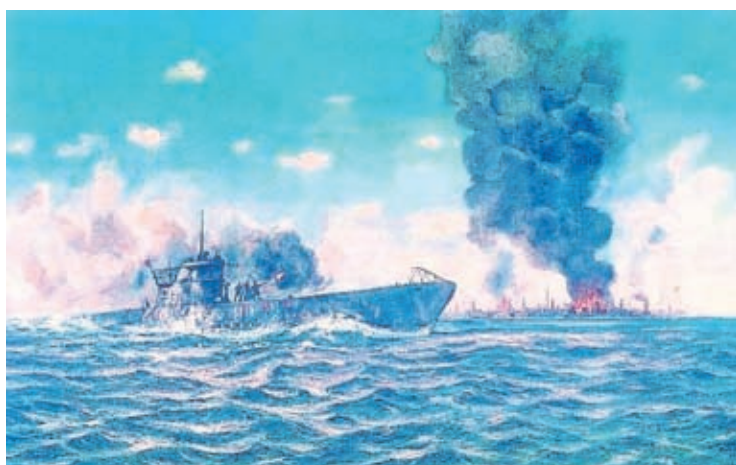
The photograph below was taken in 2005 by Steve Fremgen. This is what remains of the foundations for gun emplacements on top of Colorado Point during World War II. This was part of the gun system intended to defend the island and refinery. The guns were removed in 1945, soon after the war was over. These foundations are 77 years old at this time. These guns could rotate 360 degrees.

diers arrived in Aruba, after which the Scots left again. Heavy American bombers visited Aruba and the Dakota airport was actually too small for that. The runway was extended and had to be re-paved. Large camouflaged parking spaces for the American planes were built around the airport. The area was cordoned off with barbed

wire and guarded by American soldiers.

The Attack

On the night of February 16, a large-scale attack by the German submarine U-156 took place. Several torpedoes hit ships lying off the coast or in port. The Pedernales was the first, the Oranjestad the next to be hit. Both ships caught fire and sank. More followed that night. The number of victims was large. Some Arubans, still unaware of the importance of being darkened during a bombardment in the dark, turned on their lights in the house and drove the car, headlights on, to the coast, hoping to spot the submarine.



Continued on Page 10



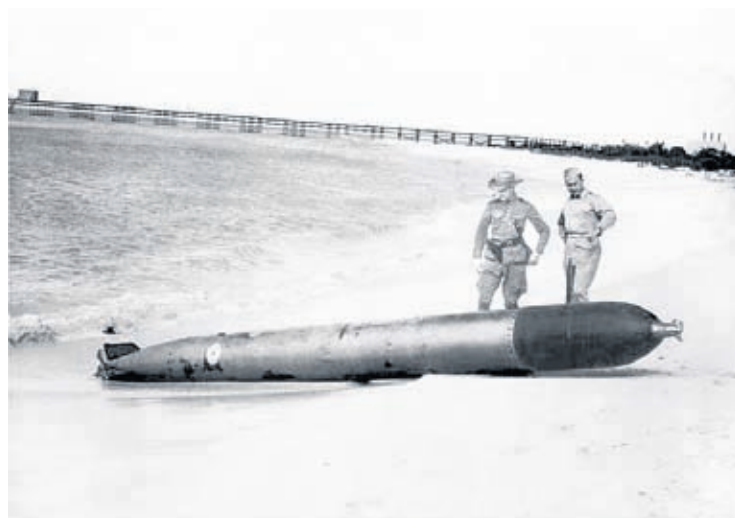
Feb 16, 1942

Commemorating 80 years of the attack on Aruba during World War II

Continued from Page 9

The main target for the submarine, however, was Lago. In those days there was no eclipse, the target was there in full light. After firing the torpedoes, U-156 surfaced and they hurried to prepare the heavy guns on deck of the submarine to bombard the refinery. In the excitement of the moment, however, the gunner on duty forgot to release the shut-off valve at the bottom of the cannon: when firing the first projectile, the heavy cannon exploded killing the gunner.

This fatal mistake escaped the Lago from virtually total destruction, because after the loss of this cannon the submarine only had much lighter guns on board. The refinery and the buildings around it were still fired with this, but the damage was very limited. For example, Aruba crawled through the eye of the needle that night, but not only because of the failure of the bombardment of the Lago: there was another ship, loaded with 3000 tons of TNT (dynamite), in the harbor. The Henry Gibbons



Torpedo at Eagle Beach
Unexploded torpedo fired on 16 Feb. 1942 by U-156 at the Arkansas, berthed at Eagle Pier.
Inspected by Dutch, left, and US Army Officer, Cap. Robert Bruskin.
Four Dutch marines were killed when trying to take it apart and it exploded.

had not yet set sail when the torpedo attack began. The crew first wanted to drink coffee before choosing the sea. With a direct hit, the destruction on Aruba would have been unimaginably great.

A day later, a torpedo was found on the beach near the Arend refinery. In an unsuccessful attempt to dismantle it, some soldiers were killed.

After the attack on San Nicolas and Lago, the inhabitants of San Nicolas began to move away.

Many Arubans went to Santa Cruz, families of Americans traveled back to the US via Maracaibo. Immediately after the attack, artillery positions began: tent camps were erected at the Seroe Colorado lighthouse and at Seagrape Cove. The tankers that had to bring oil from Lake Maracaibo to Aruba had to proceed very carefully from now on: they only sailed in convoys accompanied by naval vessels and patrolling aircraft. Also in 1944 a few ships were torpedoed off the coast of Aruba. From 1942, the water and

food supply was precarious in Aruba. This was due to the large number of people, mainly soldiers, that had been added and, moreover, a lot was built. As always they were completely dependent on supplies from outside, but the Battle of the Atlantic raged in all its fierce and many boats with food and material did not make the crossing.

The legend of U-156

The story of U-156 also mentions that, in addition to a fatality, there was also a seriously injured crew member who lost his leg in the explosion. This seriously injured person was brought to Martinique after U-156 had withdrawn from Aruban waters. This was French territory, but took a neutral position. There was a military hospital and the wounded was left there for treatment. By the way, things didn't end well with U-156: a year later, when the U-boat (with and other crew) surfaced elsewhere in the Caribbean during a patrol mission at one point and was not on his guard, an American bomber suddenly appeared and seized the submarine. U-156 was wrecked with man and mouse. How

the story of the exploded guns came to be found is a chapter of its own: in the years after the war, an American staff member of the Lago decided to spend his several months leave in Europe. As was customary at the time, he took his car on vacation. And so an American car with Aruban license plates drove through Europe. When he was in Germany at one point and drove into a gas station to refuel, he was helped by a somewhat infirm man; at the sight of the Aruban license plate, the German exclaimed: "Ah, that's where I lost my leg!" And that's how this story came about.

The history of U-boat expeditions has been exhaustively researched by various historians and so is this story. After the war, the logs of the U-boats and also of the U-156 were captured by the Allies from the Germans. The story of the exploded guns could thus be confirmed.

For more about the attack on Aruba in World War II see: www.lago-colony.com, under World War II.

Source: <http://www.historiarubaweb.com>. □



kustbatterij Juana Motta (picture courtesy lagoon-colony.com)



Please hold: Pricy way to jump IRS phone line at tax time

By **FATIMA HUSSEIN**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — If there's one thing that pains everyone trying to reach the IRS at tax time, it's being stuck on endless hold.

Well, not everyone.

E. Martin Davidoff's accounting firm spends upwards of \$5,000 a year to a company that can zip him and others to the front of the line to get through to an IRS customer service representative. He says paying for enQ's line-jumping service cuts out hours every day that he would otherwise spend waiting to talk to an agent.

"It's the epitome of American entrepreneurship," says Davidoff, who heads the National Tax Controversy Practice for Prager Metis in New Jersey.

Consumer advocates are less enamored with enQ, seeing it as a pay-to-play arrangement that gives those who can afford it a way to get quick access to what should be a free government service equally available to all.

Members of Congress from both parties have concerns, too. The service is expected to come up on Thursday when the Senate Finance Committee holds a hearing on customer service problems at the IRS, where call volumes have



A sign is displayed outside the Internal Revenue Service building May 4, 2021, in Washington. Associated Press

reached record levels.

"No taxpayers should have to fork over \$1,000 to a private company to get their phone calls answered by the IRS. It's maddening," committee chairman Sen. Ron Wyden of Oregon wrote in an email to the AP. "Rebuilding this agency so it can serve hardworking taxpayers is a top priority, and the committee will again examine the issue this week."

Last November, Sens. Bill Cassidy, R-La.; Todd Young, R-Ind.; Bob Menendez, D-N.J.; and Mark Warner, D-Va., wrote to the IRS to urge the agency to inves-

tigate how the company's robocalls to the IRS affect agency phone systems.

The company's bots regularly get in the queue for various IRS service lines, and then clients who dial in to enQ can swap in to spots at the front of the waiting list.

Tax professionals who need regular access to IRS services during the busy filing season say that while enQ may be controversial, it's necessary for them to do complicated tax work. The service, which can cost \$300 a month or \$1,000 a year, claims to cut phone hold times by up to 90%.

And the problem is immense. At the height of the 2021 filing season, the IRS was receiving more than 1,500 calls per second.

National Taxpayer Advocate Erin Collins, who serves as an IRS ombudsman, told a House subcommittee earlier this month that taxpayers had more difficulty reaching the IRS by phone in 2021 than ever before. Because of staffing issues and an overload of work, just 11% of the 282 million phone calls received last year were answered.

Andrew Valiente, founder and CEO of enQ, declined to comment in detail, stat-

ing in an email that he was "hyper-focused on building" the business. In a video on his website, he says his approach may be "unorthodox," but it's also a "no-brainer" to avoid wasting time on hold.

Mark Steber, chief tax officer at Jackson Hewitt Tax Service, is among the many CPAs who use enQ.

"We're conflicted that it costs money to access a free government service," Steber said, "but in the service of serving American taxpayers, I kind of fault the IRS for not having funding and resources — but they haven't been funded for 20 years."

Legislation that would have given the IRS billions of dollars to bolster its enforcement capacity and update everything from printers to photocopiers to the agency's staffing levels and improving telephone service is stalled in Congress.

Robert Nassau, director of the Low Income Taxpayer Clinic at Syracuse University College of Law, said getting through to an IRS agent can feel like winning the lottery. "I can't tell for certain how much harder it has made it for people like me to get through," he said of enQ, "but these bots are probably trying to call the same number that I'm trying to call." □

Elon Musk gives about \$5.7 billion in Tesla stock to charity

DETROIT (AP) — Tesla CEO Elon Musk donated about 5 million shares of company stock worth roughly \$5.7 billion to an unidentified charity in November, according to a regulatory filing.

The shares were donated from Nov. 19 to Nov. 29, the filing with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission said.

In late October, Musk, the world's richest man, tweeted that he would sell \$6 billion in Tesla stock and give the money to the United Nations World Food Program if the organization would describe how the money would solve world hunger. But the filing did

not name any recipients for the donation.

David Beasley, WFP executive director, said in a statement Tuesday that the organization hasn't received anything from Musk yet. "There are millions of people around the world on the brink of starvation. Whether WFP receives any of this money is yet to be seen, but I am excited to hear that Elon is engaged. This is an amazing and great first step," Beasley said in a statement sent by a spokesman.

A message was left Tuesday seeking comment from Tesla.

In a separate filing, Musk

reported that as of Dec. 31 he holds 231.7 million shares of the electric vehicle and solar panel maker's stock, or 21.2% of the company's total value. The amount includes 172.6 million shares held by Musk's trust and options to buy another 59.1 million shares within 60 days of Dec. 31, 2021.

Last November, Musk began selling shares, which he said on Twitter would go to pay for his tax obligations on stock options that are part of his all-stock compensation package. Analysts estimate his tax obligation at \$10 billion to \$15 billion.

So far he has sold more



CEO Elon Musk departs from the justice center in Wilmington, Del., on July 13, 2021. Associated Press

than 15 million shares worth roughly \$16.4 billion. Musk had written on Twitter that he would sell 10% of his

stake in the company. With the sales in late December, Musk is close to selling 10%. □

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Outpourings
- 7 Son of Zeus
- 11 Con quest
- 12 Infamous emperor
- 13 Relaxed
- 14 Delighted
- 15 Alaskan peak
- 17 Crib occupant
- 20 Title documents
- 23 Saloon supply
- 24 Seasoning herb
- 26 Rap's — Nas X
- 27 Workout unit
- 28 Sense of self
- 29 Plain to see
- 31 Stroke
- 32 Plow pioneer
- 33 Nile reptiles
- 34 Russian drinks
- 37 Sign
- 39 Gazelle's cousin
- 43 Course cry
- 44 Did garden work
- 45 Fling
- 46 Wanting

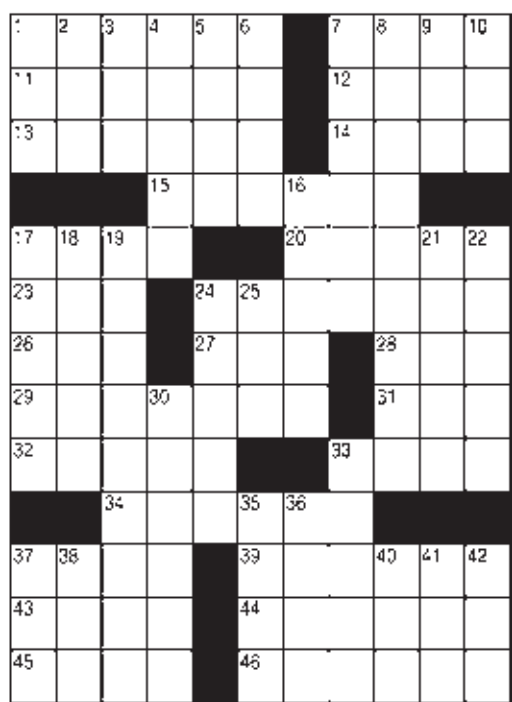
DOWN

- 1 Soaking site
- 2 Contrived
- 3 "Roses — red"
- 4 Yes-man
- 5 Otherwise
- 6 Glimpsed
- 7 One with a line
- 8 Some pitchers
- 9 Memo-rable time
- 10 Lawn makeup
- 16 Skilled
- 17 Did hay work
- 18 Full of energy
- 19 Faithful group



Yesterday's answer

- 21 Uncover
- 22 Messy sorts
- 24 Guiding principle
- 25 Egg tender
- 30 Un-manned planes
- 33 Rockies resort
- 35 New Zealand native
- 36 Hymn finish
- 37 Many a time
- 38 Cattle call
- 40 Sports drink suffix
- 41 Director Ang
- 42 Say further



2-16

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

2-16

CRYPTOQUOTE

L K F G J K F G L G S K S G C O

N M O K S T M O . K F B R I P O C O M G J

W P M O L P J S E O K B J S I O I O M B .

— W M G O B M G N I J N I G E O M

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: O IMITATORS, A SERVICE RACE, HOW OFTEN HAVE YOUR ATTACKS ROUSED MY BILE AND OFTEN MY LAUGHTER! — HORACE

EXPLAINER: Will burglar alarms still work after 3G shutdown?



The iPhone 5S, left, and iPhone 5c are displayed, Sept. 17, 2013, in New York.

Associated Press

By TALI ARBEL

NEW YORK (AP) — As telecom companies rev up the newest generation of mobile service, called 5G, they're shutting down old networks — a costly, years-in-the-works process that's now prompting calls for a delay because many products out there still rely on the old standard, 3G.

AT&T is scheduled to be the first carrier to shut down its 3G network on Feb. 22. T-Mobile will shut down its 3G network by summer and Verizon in December.

The home-alarm industry has asked the Federal Communications Commission, the U.S. regulator, to delay AT&T's network sunset until December. The FCC is monitoring the 3G phase-out and working to "implement safeguards" for older phones and other devices, spokesperson Paloma Perez said late Monday.

Verizon has already pushed back its shutdown — twice — from an original target date in 2019, saying customers needed more time to update their devices. T-Mobile has also delayed the shutdown of the Sprint

3G network it acquired in 2020, to the end of March; it'll shut down the T-Mobile 3G network by July 1.

WHY IS 3G SHUTTING DOWN?

First, some history. AT&T's 3G network launched in the U.S. in 2004; later that decade it was the exclusive carrier for early iPhones, helping usher in the first phase of the smartphone era. The networks we currently rely on for video streaming, social apps, Uber and other must-haves of the modern era mostly use the subsequent 4G standard.

For the carriers, shutting down 3G is an efficiency move. As they upgrade to the latest technology, they shut off outdated networks and use the freed-up bandwidth for newer — and what they hope will be more profitable — services.

WHAT IF I HAVE AN OLDER PHONE?

People with older phones that aren't compatible with 4G will have to upgrade; once 3G shuts down, those phones won't work for calls or texting. AT&T says it has reached out to offer its cus-

tomers free replacements via letters, emails and texts. Spokesperson Jim Greer said fewer than 1% of AT&T's consumer devices, including phones, tablets and watches, will lose cellular service, but declined to say how many devices that is. The company reported about 196 million phones and connected devices using its network in the most recent quarter. □



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WK 52 Oceanside \$55,000
WK 7 and 14 - all views

GOLD SEASON

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2 Bed Oceanside \$11,000
2 Bed Ocean view \$8,000
2 Bed Garden view \$6,000
3 Bed Ocean view \$13,000

Marriott Aruba Ocean Club PLATINUM SEASON

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2 Bed Ocean view \$18,000
1 Bed ocean front \$13,000
1 Bed ocean View \$11,000

GOLD SEASON

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2 Bed Ocean view \$9,500
1 Bed oceanfront \$9,000
1 Bed ocean View \$6,500

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Quinta Brunson breaks down A+ grade for 'Abbott Elementary'

GARY GERARD HAMILTON

New York (AP) — When "Abbott Elementary" recently trended on Twitter daily for nearly a week, Quinta Brunson was speechless.

"I was looking at it myself like 'What is going on?'" said Brunson, the creator and writer of the first semester-sitcom and a former viral video star herself. "Here's a new one that kind of fits the same feel and vibe of the shows that we binge a lot, like 'Parks (and Recreation)' or 'The Office' or 'Friends' and all these other shows. So, I think that people are enjoying having something new. ... I've seen multiple people say, 'I turn off 'Euphoria' and then watch 'Abbott' for a palate cleanse.'"

The hilarious mockumentary became ABC's first comedy to quadruple its ratings since its premiere. "Abbott Elementary" follows the staff at a struggling, underfunded Philadelphia school. Brunson, a Philly native whose mother was an educator, named the sitcom after her sixth grade teacher.

The former "A Black Lady Sketch Show" star spoke with The Associated Press about the buzz surrounding the show, her rise from viral internet star to prime-time sitcom creator, and Black women creating their own Hollywood opportunities via the internet. Answers may have been edited for



This image released by ABC shows Quinta Brunson in a scene from "Abbott Elementary."

Associated Press

brevity and clarity.

AP: Teachers seem to really connect with "Abbott." Did you realize it would create a discussion among educators?

Brunson: A lot of friends of mine who are educators will send me screenshots from their educator groups on Facebook...I think it's amazing that now we have this opportunity for a group that hasn't been shown too much— a group of Black educators — to be on screen, and not only be on screen, but then have

some fun, too.

AP: Does "Abbott Elementary" have a message?

Brunson: The job first and foremost was to make a comedy, make a funny show...And then I just like my comedies to have heart in them. Those are my two goals: heart and humor. I think when you put both of those things in a school, an elementary school — sorry, a public, underfunded elementary school — naturally, it uncovers some of the larger issues at play, right? Why isn't the support there? ... What are they lacking

in resources? Because the goal was to have heart, a lot of the time, inherently, you get a message because we couldn't avoid what's going on in public schools if we wanted to. We would be making an insincere show.

AP: Have you been able to talk to your former teacher?

Brunson: I called Ms. Abbott or she called me — I can't remember — and we had just the best conversation. She was so over the moon and said she had been following my career for a while, and we would

up crying and stuff. She told me she was retiring this year and this was just incredible to see. The funny thing was she didn't even realize I had named the show after her. And I'm like, "Yeah? Where do you think 'Abbott' came from?"

AP: Many people know you from your early days of viral videos like the "He Got Money" skits. What does it mean to you when fans realize that viral star is the "Abbott" creator?

Brunson: For the people who go, "Oh my God, that was her?" That's kind of my favorite because I think, to me, it kind of shows the pride that people say that with or tweet that with — feels special. Like, look, we can do anything. We can come from anywhere. .. There are no bounds to what can be done unless you put them on yourself.

AP: Black women have essentially been overlooked in Hollywood since its inception and not given a seat at the table. But what's it like now for creators like you and Issa Rae who've used the Internet to create your own opportunities?

Brunson: I think it's exciting. I think we're at a really good point right now because of all of the work that people before us have put in. There have been countless Black women who have been unfortunately mistreated, blackballed, looked over.□

Regina Hall, Amy Schumer, Wanda Sykes to host Oscars



This combination of photos shows Regina Hall, from left, Amy Schumer and Wanda Sykes, who are in final talks to host the 94th Academy Awards.

Associated Press

By The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — After three years without a host, the Oscars are making up for lost time with three hosts

for this year's awards: Amy Schumer, Regina Hall and Wanda Sykes are set to host the 94th Academy Awards, producer Will Packer said

Tuesday.

"This year's show is all about uniting movie lovers," Packer said in a statement. "It's apropos that we've lined up three of the most dynamic, hilarious women with very different comedic styles."

Packer has worked with Hall several times as the producer of films like "Girls Trip," "Think Like a Man" and "Little."

The show is hoping to rebound from the dismal viewership of last year's broadcast, which was both an all-time low and the norm for pandemic-era

awards shows. In addition to bringing back starry hosts and bumping the best picture nominees to a set ten, the Academy is also hoping to spike interest through social media voting for a "fan favorite" movie that will be announced during the show, as well as a chance to win a trip to Los Angeles for the ceremony.

"We're invigorated by Will's vision for this year's Oscars: celebrating movie lovers alongside moviemakers and spotlighting fan favorites that prove how cinema can unite us all," said Academy President David Rubin

and Academy CEO Dawn Hudson in a statement.

It's the first time hosting for all three women and the first time in 35 years there has been this many hosts for one broadcast.

Craig Erwich, president, Hulu Originals and ABC Entertainment, added that they are "Thrilled to have them at the helm to deliver an incredible show full of unforgettable moments and laughter."

The 94th Oscars will be held on March 27 at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles and broadcast live on ABC starting at 8 p.m. ET.□

'Next Gen' car modernizes NASCAR, potentially levels field

By MARK LONG

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. (AP)

— NASCAR was long overdue to revamp its aging, arguably outdated race car. The previous version was an overly engineered, off-the-chart expensive design that had been tweaked, twisted, trimmed and tuned to make it fractionally faster and significantly safer over the past five-plus decades. "It was the most supped-up 1970s Mustang that you could imagine," driver David Ragan said.

It's now a museum piece. NASCAR's newest version is pretty much a kit car. Teams get all the same pieces from varying vendors and have detailed instructions regarding how to put it together. It's NASCAR's most notable overhaul and should result in a vehicle that's more durable, more economical and considerably more modern — even if the changes are barely visible to the casual fan.

The "Next Gen" car made its debut — a soft opening, of sorts — in the exhibition Busch Clash at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum a little more than a week ago and will take center stage this week in the season opener at Daytona International Speedway. The sold-out Daytona 500 will serve as the ultimate proving ground for an iteration that's been years in the making and could level the playing field to some degree.

"We've never had anything change as much as we have with the car this year," 2017 Cup Series champion Martin Truex Jr. said. "It's going to take us quite a while to figure out where we are at, to learn about this car, to understand how to make it work on different types of racetracks, and I think that's going to go on for a while."

"It's going to take a while to really feel comfortable where you are or understand things to the extent we have in the past."

The new car might not look much different to someone flipping television channels and landing on the 500, but



Joey Logano, bottom left, and Kyle Busch, bottom right, lead the field during a NASCAR exhibition auto race at Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, Sunday, Feb. 6, 2022, in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

the changes are significant to drivers, diehard fans and industry insiders.

The cars have bigger aluminum wheels that feature one center lug nut instead of five traditional ones. NASCAR moved car numbers forward on door panels, creating an opportunity for sponsors to enhance branding opportunities. They also have independent front and rear suspension, as well as a transaxle instead of a transmission, with the transaxle performing gear-changing and power-splitting functions in one integrated unit.

And many of the pieces that fit under the car, items that used to cost hundreds of thousands annually to develop, are now spec parts that are essentially bought off store shelves. They're the same for everyone and not allowed to be manipulated.

"Underneath the body that car is essentially bought off the shelves from Costco,"

said David Wilson, president of Toyota Racing Development.

"There's a lot more restraints to what we're allowed to do," two-time Cup champion Kyle Busch said. "There's a lot more rules. We're confined to a smaller box, but there's still a lot of knobs on this thing that we haven't quite turned yet."

"Hopefully we can still find the tricks in which this car likes to make you go fast. More to learn for sure."

NASCAR's three manufacturers — Chevrolet, Ford and Toyota — are expected to spend months searching.

"We could see ourselves still trying to wrap our heads

around this by the time we get to midseason," Wilson said. "It's going to take us some time to see the impact of downforce and drag and how that changes from track to track. So it fills me with angst. It fills me with excitement at the same time."

Drivers expect to see a performance difference, with the new car being able to be driven harder into the corner and being a little sketchy coming out of it. The result should be the racing equivalent of being able to drive sideways without spinning out.

"The cars, in general, seem to really like when you drive the hell out of them, which

is fun," 2012 Cup champion Brad Keselowski said. "I think you'll see more dive-bomb-type moves. ... That will get people to drive over their heads that normally couldn't get away with it. You're going to see a lot of guys step over themselves on corner exits."

NASCAR is banking on better racing. The long-term outcome also could allow smaller teams with less financial backing to be more competitive. The new car was a big reason so many new owners have joined the Cup Series: Denny Hamlin and Michael Jordan with 23XI Racing; Justin Marks and Pitbull with Trackhouse Racing; and Keselowski becoming a part owner at Roush Fenway Racing.

The entry-level cost to get a car to the track is pretty much the same for everyone since there's no overhead to develop and improve every nut and bolt, every curve and corner. Engineers, mechanics, crew chiefs and drivers spent hours, days, weeks, months and years polishing every detail of the old car into a rolling work of art — albeit with 50-year-old technology.

Now, it's a much more sophisticated rendition and could set the tone for a new generation of stock car.

"They hit a home run," Busch said. "Nine out of 10. It's right there. It's really close. I think a lot of the race teams love the appeal, as well as a lot of fans love the appeal as well to have what it looks like."

"Now we're all just trying to figure it out, what makes it tick, what makes it go fast. There's a lot of different levers that we have yet to pull on this thing to make it what we need to and we'll keep working on that." □



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Emotional Valieva takes lead in Olympic figure skating

By **BERNIE WILSON**

AP Sports Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Russian teen sensation Kamila Valieva put aside the emotional exhaustion of being at the center of a doping scandal and took the lead in the women's figure skating competition after the short program at the Beijing Olympics.

Skating despite a positive drug test, Valieva started her pursuit of a second gold medal with a score of 82.16 points on Tuesday. She faltered on her opening triple axel and then made it through the rest of her program.

The 15-year-old Valieva tested positive for a banned heart medication from a sample given in December, a result that only emerged last week after she helped Russia win gold in the team event with a historic performance. It included her landing the first quadruple jumps by a woman at the Olympics.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport ruled Monday that Valieva should be allowed to compete in part because she is a minor, known as a "protected person," and is subject to different rules from an adult athlete. But the decision has been roundly criticized, including by others that performed before her on Tuesday.

Valieva is the overwhelming favorite for the gold and Russia is aiming for the first sweep by any nation of the women's Olympic podium.

Reigning world champion Anna Shcherbakova was second with 80.20 points. Kaori Sakamoto of Japan had a score of 79.84 to prevent a 1-2-3 Russian finish in the short program. Alexandra Trusova, the other member of the Russian "Quad Squad," was fourth with 74.60 points.

Whatever happens on the ice, Valieva will not get a medal ceremony moment in Beijing. Nor will any skater who finishes in the top three with her.

Valieva told Russian state broadcaster Channel One in comments shown Monday night that "these days



Kamila Valieva, of the Russian Olympic Committee, reacts in the women's short program during the figure skating at the 2022 Winter Olympics, Tuesday, Feb. 15, 2022, in Beijing.

Associated Press

have been very difficult for me. I'm happy but I'm tired emotionally."

She broke into tears as she skated off the ice Tuesday night.

The free skate is Thursday.

SHIFFRIN

Mikaela Shiffrin is 0 for 4 at the Beijing Olympics after finishing 18th in the downhill. It was hardly unexpected considering it was the first time she's competed in that event in her Olympic career and her struggles in earlier races.

Shiffrin is planning to enter two more races: the Alpine combined on Thursday — she won a silver in that at the 2018 Pyeongchang Olympics — and the team event on Saturday. She owns two gold medals from past Olympics; no American Alpine skier ever has

won three in a career.

Corinne Suter of Switzerland won the downhill gold and defending champion Sofia Goggia of Italy had an inspiring performance to take the silver less than a month after a bad crash and serious leg injury. Nadia Delago of Italy took the bronze.

SU JOINS GU

Teenager Su Yiming went spinning through the air in front of the cooling towers and smokestacks of an old steel mill to win China's first Olympic snowboarding gold medal and elevate his celebrity status.

Su had such a big lead after two rounds that other competitors played it safe, just trying to earn a podium spot. He took the silver in slopestyle and would have had gold if judges had no-

ticed Max Parrot missing a grab on his first jump. Parrot took bronze Tuesday.

It was China's second gold medal at Big Air Shougang following Eileen Gu's win in freestyle skiing.

Su, a 17-year-old aspiring actor who had a part in the 2014 action film "The Taking of Tiger Mountain," led by 17.5 points entering the final round. He started the competition with consecutive 1800s — five spins — first completing the trick going forward, then backward.

Su went off casually on his last jump and then held his hands to his head during an ovation from the crowd. Su hadn't seen his parents in seven months while training in Europe and competing around the world. Shortly after getting on the podium, Su spotted them

in the stands and began to cry. He later spoke to them through a fence separating those allowed inside Beijing's Olympic bubble from the fans.

"I was thinking back to when I was 4 years old and my first time snowboarding," he said in English. "I'm so appreciative. This moment is so special for my family."

SILVER FOR GU

Eileen Gu won't win three gold medals at the Beijing Games, but she can still become the first extreme sports athlete to win three medals at an Olympics.

The 18-year-old American-born freestyler who is competing for her mother's home country of China narrowly missed out on the gold medal in slopestyle. She finished .33 points behind Mathilde Gremaud of Switzerland. Gremaud took the bronze in the big air event won by Gu.

Gremaud was the first to go in the second round and posted the score to beat. Gu vaulted from the back of the pack but couldn't quite overtake Gremaud.

"I trust the judges. Sometimes they give it to you, sometimes they don't," Gu said.

"And today, they didn't. ... I did everything that I could that was in my control, and some things you just can't control and you just have to accept it."

Gu will compete in freeski halfpipe later this week.

BOBSLEDDING HISTORY

Germany posted the first podium sweep by any nation in any Olympic bobsled race, led by Francesco Friedrich piloting the winning sled in the two-man event. Johannes Lochner drove the silver-medal sled and Christoph Hafer steered his bobsled to the bronze.

SPEEDSKATING
The United States won its second speedskating medal of the Beijing Olympics when it took the bronze in team pursuit. With 36-year-old Joey Mantia leading three American skaters through all eight laps, the U.S. denied Sven Kramer of the Netherlands his 10th career medal. □